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Sheridan. From New and Original Material; including a Manuscript Diary by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. By WALTER SICHEL. In two volumes. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1909. Pp. xviii, 631; ix, 549.)

MR. WALTER SICHEL has put infinite diligence and care into the preparation of these two bulky volumes on Sheridan. He has collected a vast amount of material, much of it new to students of English history in the days of George III. He has discovered and given to the public as an appendix to his book, a diary of Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire, written during the critical period of the Regency debates in 1788-1789. He has also printed a large number of hitherto unpublished letters of Sheridan, his wife, and many of their friends and relatives. He has devoted nearly two hundred pages to a psychological analysis of Sheridan's own character and the character of the age in which he lived. He has traced the ancestry of the Sheridans and the collateral branches of the Sheridan family. He has given a long and detailed history of the first Mrs. Sheridan and of the whole remarkable Linley family. The rest of Mr. Sichel's 1177 pages are devoted to the story of Sheridan's life and achievements, his political and social triumphs and disasters, his friends and admirers, his successes and his failures. And yet the result, so far as concerns a real understanding of Sheridan himself, is disappointing. There is a great deal about Sheridan, but, amid it all, the man Sheridan disappears. Mr. Sichel indulges in much characterization. He uses many superlatives; but at no time does he place Sheridan in a simple and straightforward setting before his readers and allow them to make his acquaintance for themselves.

Some exception might also be taken to the balance of Mr. Sichel's book—that is, from the point of view of the student of English history and politics. For instance, over a hundred pages are devoted to the romantic story of Elizabeth Linley's elopement with Sheridan, to the duels which followed, and the subsequent marriage of the youthful pair. It is not until the end of the first volume is reached that there is any mention of Sheridan's political career. There can, of course, be no complaint of Mr. Sichel for giving an adequate treatment of Sheridan as an actor, a dramatist, and a theatrical manager. These were essential parts of his career and his dramatic work will always be considered by many his great achievement and his most important claim to immortality. But in Sheridan's own opinion, political success was a higher step on the ladder than success on the stage; and the disappointments of Mr. Sichel's second volume are great in proportion to the importance that the reader attaches to Sheridan's part in English politics.

As much as Sheridan valued the friendship of the Prince of Wales, it can hardly be imagined that he himself would have been satisfied with a biography which devotes several chapters to this subject, which even belittles Sheridan's friendship with Fox for the sake of enhancing the

friendly relations between Sheridan and the prince, and at the same time dismisses in a line some of Sheridan's most important work in the service of the nation. In spite of his pathetic affection for the corrupt roué who during the later years of Sheridan's life was at the head of the state, Sheridan was a true democrat. He was full of enthusiasm for humanity, and his alliance with Fox was not a merely superficial arrangement, due to both being thrown into opposition to the government of Lord North and his Tory successors. It was due to a real agreement between Fox and Sheridan on political principles. Both stood for popular rights and liberties. Both opposed the American war and defended the French Revolution. Both desired reform at home, religious liberty, justice to Ireland, emancipation of the slaves throughout the British Empire, and more sympathetic justice for the masses in England. But with Mr. Sichel, these deeper principles are passed over in the mass of trivialities and intrigues. Differences between Sheridan and his political friends are accentuated, and Sheridan's service to the nation is subordinated to his services to this or that politician or ministry.

One of the causes with which Sheridan identified himself was the reform of the Scottish burghs. On this subject he accumulated a vast amount of material, and between 1787 and 1794 he made twelve speeches in Parliament upon it. Yet in the record of his political life, Mr. Sichel devotes exactly one line to Sheridan's efforts to obtain this reform, although in the early chapters of his book in analyzing Sheridan's political activities he had given the whole of five lines to the same subject. Sheridan's sympathies with the people, his warm indignation in cases of wrong and oppression, apparently call out no answering spark from Mr. Sichel. The whole incident of Sheridan's heroic intervention on behalf of the prisoners in Coldbath Fields, and his speeches on the subject, are dismissed in two lines of a foot-note. If the student of English political development desired to give Sheridan due credit for the help he rendered to the people in the long battle for liberty against the combination laws, for justice for the agricultural laborer, and for the freedom of the press, he would not find in all the eleven hundred pages of Mr. Sichel's biography three lines to help him in his search.

A. G. P.

The Life of W. J. Fox, Public Teacher and Social Reformer, 1786-1864. By the late RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D., concluded by EDWARD GARNETT. (London and New York: John Lane and Company. 1909. Pp. xiii, 339.)

It is for his share in the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws that William Johnson Fox is now chiefly remembered. In the six years that preceded repeal in 1846, Fox was as busy with his pen and as frequent in his appearances on public platforms as Cobden or Bright.